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MAY 14 2007

Docket No.: 4590-381

Application No.: 10/528,033

REMARKS

Reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-11 remain pending in the application. New claims 12 and 13 have been added.

Claims 1-5 and 7 are rejected under 35 USC 102 (b) as being anticipated by Ootani et al. (US Patent 5,821,482). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 1 recites "A keyboard comprising: a switch, a rigid key allowing an operator to operate the switch, a front face having an opening traversed by the rigid key, and sealing means preventing particles from penetrating between the rigid key and the opening, wherein the sealing means comprise a flexible membrane traversed by the rigid key, attached to the key and to the front face". A sealing means is not disclosed in Ootani. The sealing means requires a flexible membrane 6 traversed by the rigid key 3. The flexible membrane 6 is attached both to the front face 4 and to the rigid key 3 advantageously by bonding. By contrast, the flexible membrane (elastic tube 6) disclosed in Ootani is not attached to the front face (panel 5). In Ootani, the lower ring flange 62 of the elastic tube 6 is only pressed to the panel 5 but not attached to the panel. (See col 3, line 54). The fact that the flange 62 is pressed to the panel is due to the combination of the wedge 43 and the step 52 that retain the slider 4. (See col 3, lines 57-65). In the present invention recited in claim 1 the flexible membrane advantageously is attached to the panel permit to avoid any supplementary means to retain the slider like wedge and step. Another advantage of avoiding wedge 43 and step 52 is that the noise of the contact between wedge and step is avoided when the slider moves up. In this movement, the slider is only retained by the flexible membrane that is not noisy where it moves.

With respect to claim 2, although Ootani discloses with respect to the Fig. 7 embodiment that the cup rubber 6 can be adhered to the upper surface of the panel, this only applies to the Fig. 7 embodiment.

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Claims 6 and 8-11 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ootani et al. (US Patent 5,821,482). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claims 6 and 8-11 recite additional, important features and should be patentable along with the independent claim. Accordingly, the obviousness rejection should be withdrawn.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned, Applicant's attorney of record, to facilitate advancement of the present application.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 07-1337 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

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